

500 would appear as a Memoir of the Zoological Survey. The outbreak of the war with Japan stopped all publications. As the war dragged on and it appeared that Government Publications would be unduly delayed the Council of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal accepted the manuscript for this series. I am deeply grateful to all concerned.

Of course thanks and acknowledgement are due to a host of Kols who graciously allowed themselves to be questioned and probed, measured and photographed. They have admitted us into their houses and into their councils. They have shared with us many of their joys, troubles and difficulties. They are a very human folk, and as one sat and talked with them, his heart went out to them, and we felt as one. They have been pleased and touched as we have attempted to understand their life and thought. What is here offered of that, however, is but a drop in the great ocean of Kol experience, and the author is conscious of all its limitations.

● 101 It is also necessary to make clear the terminology of this book, 114 for there has been a change in the meaning of terms. The word 'Kol' was once used in a generic sense to describe 'Munda-speaking' tribes and the term 'Kolarian' is still frequently found, especially in older textbooks of Ethnology. The word was originally used by Max Muller in a linguistic sense, but has now been generally abandoned in favour of 'Munda'. The Munda-speaking people, as distinguished from the Dravidian, delineate the large majority of the aboriginal people living in Chota Nagpur and in the highlands of Central India. The word 'Kol' as it will appear in these pages denotes a particular branch of the 'Munda-speaking' stock settled in Central India.

144 There are various theories held today as to the racial composition 174 of present-day India. The first inhabitants of India are thought to have been a Negroid people akin to the Negritos of today. This strain is at present largely submerged. In the course of time another race of people became dominant in the land. Dr. Guha has called them Proto-Australoids. They apparently displaced the Negritos and probably absorbed some of their blood. The Proto-Australoids of India show marked resemblances to the Veddas of Ceylon and to the aborigines of Australia. Practically the whole of the Central Indian and South Indian tribes, though speaking different tongues, belong to this group.* If anything, these people may be called the true autochtones of the Indian Peninsula. This same racial stratum persists today (though probably modified by contacts with other groups) in the Oraons, Santals, Mundas and Kharias of Bihar; in the Kols, Bhils, Gonds, Korkus, Baigas, etc., of Central India; in upper India among

[p. 1]

CHAPTER I

THE KOL TRIBE OF CENTRAL INDIA

DISTRIBUTION AND STRENGTH OF THE TRIBE. The Kol tribe, with which this monograph deals, is one of the primitive tribes of Central India. The Central India area, in which they are found, may be described as a triangle with the Nerbudda and the Son rivers for its hypotenuse, having for one of its sides the valley of the Ganges and, for the other, the Chambal river and the Chitor hills. The Kol tribe occupies the north-eastern part of this area. While individual members may be considerably scattered the bulk of the Kols is found in the north of the Central Provinces; in Rewa State, which is included in the Central India Agency; and in the southern portions of the United Provinces adjoining Rewa State. The main centre of distribution for the Kols is Rewa State and the Kols of Central Provinces look back to Rewa as their homeland. The accompanying map of India shows the distribution of the Kols. It will be seen that they belong to the highlands at the northern end of the peninsula. They live among the Vindhya mountains and in the Kaimur hills. These mountains have played an important part in the cultural and ethnological history of India. In early days, before the forests were denuded and the roads cut through, they were an effective barrier to the movements of people. They have been traditionally associated with the southernmost limits of Aryan influence. There is good evidence that they have sheltered some of the oldest races in India since the dawn of history.

The tribe itself should be carefully distinguished from the Munda tribes of Chota Nagpur which are frequently called Kols in the generic sense. There is no specific Kol tribe in that area, although there is a group called the Larka Kols, or Hos, famous for an insurrection in the year 1832, and a part of the district of Singhbhum is called the Kolhan after them. Mention of the specific Kol tribe is made only in the Census Reports of the Central India Agency and that for the Central Provinces. In the United Provinces the Kols are classed as an exterior caste.

The Kols stand second in strength among the Munda tribes of the Central Provinces. According to the 1931 Census the Korkus are first with 176,616 and the Kols follow with 91,556. Among all the tribes in the province the Kols stand eighth in numerical strength. In the Central Provinces as a whole the Census Reports give the following figures for the Kol tribe:

1 Figure 1, p. 2.

[text continues on p. 3]

THE KOLS OF CENTRAL INDIA

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82
768
415
582
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Kathautiyas also throw out their earthenware vessels, but not the wooden ones which are considered to be unaffected by these occurrences. This may be due to Hindu influences.

It was intimated that hypergamy is occasionally practised with the Thakuriyas but in such cases it appears that the girls are "kept" rather than "married". One group of Kathautiyas asserted their superiority over the Thakuriyas and claimed that if a Thakuriya girl came to live with a Kathautiya boy, the Thakuriyas could take her back; but that they would never take back one of their girls who went to live with the Thakuriyas.

Some Kols stated that Binj, Kathariya and Kulmangans are types of Rautiya Kols, but the best evidence appears to be otherwise and these groups are treated separately below:

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The use of the word "Rautiya" is not confined to the Kols. There is a Munda tribe in Chota Nagpur called Rautiyas and a few members of this tribe are found in the Jashpur State of the Central Provinces. It is also the name of a subcaste of Dahait, a mixed caste of village watchmen of the Jubbulpore and Mandla districts, and several of their subcaste names bear a close resemblance to those of the Kols. It is also a sub-caste of the Kawars and of a section of the Chamars and Rawats (Ahir).¹ The other subgroups of Rautiyas as noted above were not in use elsewhere except that among the Darzias, or tailors there is a Kathautiya subdivision.²

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773

2. *Thakuriyas*. Russell and Hiralal³ are of the opinion that this word is derived from *thakur* meaning "a lord", and they trace this *kurhi* to the intermarriage of Rajput males with Kol females. Such intermarriage probably followed the gradual penetration of the Rajputs into the regions occupied by the Kols. The stories given below concerning the origin of the Thakuriyas probably reflect a long period in which there was a considerable mixture of blood.

According to one story a certain Rautiya Kol had two wives who often quarrelled and the husband saw fit to scold the elder of the two. As a result she left the protection of the Kol and in anger went to the house of the *malguzar* of the village who happened to be a Thakur. She began to live on the veranda of his house, and earned her food with her own hands in any way she could. After some months she gave birth to a son and the Thakur sent word to this effect to her husband, with the request that he should come and take the mother and child

1 Russell and Hiralal, *Op. Cit.*, Vol. I, p. 402.
2 *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 374.
3 *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 609.